

AUGUSTA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY
POLICY COMMITTEE
ROOM 802, MUNICIPAL BUILDING, AUGUSTA, GEORGIA
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2003, 11:00 A.M.

Those present:

Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission

George Patty
Paul DeCamp
Lynn Russell
Sangeetha Rao
Juriah Lewis

Columbia County

Jeff Browning
Ronnie Hutto
Ron Cross
Kevin Lear

City of North Augusta

Ken McDowell

GA DOT

James Lester
Radney Simpson

Other

Scott McGregor

Aiken County

Greg Szymik
Jeanne Knapp
Steve Strohming
Chuck Smith

City of Augusta

Dennis Ellis

City of Aiken

Sandra Korbelik

Fort Gordon

Terry Smith

SC DOT

Brian Fulmer
Michael Meetze

Mr. Patty, ARTS Project Director conducted the meeting in the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman. Everyone was asked to introduce themselves to the Committee members.

1. Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation.

Mr. Patty presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Mr. Norman Nicholson who served on the ARTS Citizens Advisory Committee from October 2000 until December 2002. Mr. John Evans served from June 1997 until December 2002. Mr. Evans was not in attendance to receive his certificate of appreciation.

Mr. Nicholson commented on the importance of public participation on committees such as the CAC as a means of bridging the gap between government and private citizens, and as a means of understanding how government works. His experience with the CAC was positive and he thanked everyone for their support.

2. Election of Officers - Chairman and Vice Chairman.

Mr. Chuck Smith nominated Mr. Cavanaugh to the position of Chairman. Mr. Terry Smith nominated Mr. Cross to the position of Vice-Chairman. There being no further nominations, Mr. McDowell moved to accept nominations. Mr. Smith seconded. Motion unanimously approved. Mr. Cavanaugh was elected to the position of Chairman and Mr. Cross to the position of Vice-chairman by unanimous vote.

3. Consider approval of the minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on December 5, 2002.

Mr. McDowell moved to approve the minutes as sent out. Mr. Smith seconded. Motion unanimously approved.

4. Status of Project Reports:

(a) Georgia Highways

Mr. Simpson presented this item.

- ◆ The final field plan review will be held within a month on the Crawford Creek bridge replacement project (0000809)
- ◆ Environmental survey is complete on the safety project at SR 104 @ Gibbs Road (0003662)
- ◆ Environmental survey and concept plan are complete on the SR 232 widening project (231440)
- ◆ Old Petersburg Road was added to the state route system in order for STP funding to be used; surveys are 100% complete and plans are 50% complete.
- ◆ Awaiting for approved concept plan on the William Few Parkway widening project (250620)
- ◆ Environmental has been approved on the Parham Road bridge widening project (271040). Only five parcels need to be acquired - 3 in Richmond County and 2 in Columbia County
- ◆ Concept plans are 80% complete on the drainage improvements @ Crane Creek (0001795)
- ◆ Right-of-way is underway on the I-20 @ I-520 interchange project (210450)
- ◆ The termini has been changed on the Bobby Jones Expressway extension project to ...from Beaver Dam to Merry utility & Laney Walker to west of river... Plans are 75% complete.
- ◆ The median barrier project on US 78 (222710) and the SR 4 @ Butler Creek bridge replacement project (222720) have been awarded
- ◆ A concept team meeting was held in January and a public information meeting was held on March 6, 2003 on the Windsor Spring Road widening projects (245320, 250610, 250615); approximately 51 people attended
- ◆ The environmental document has been sent to FHWA on the Wrightsboro Road widening project (250510)

(b) South Carolina Highways

Mr. Meetze presented this item. A public information meeting is scheduled for phase II of the Bobby Jones Expressway on April 1, 2003 from 4 p.m. till 6 p.m. at the North Augusta Community Center to discuss a possible alignment alternate. The existing design shows the Bobby Jones merging with the existing US 25 interchange at I-20. From an engineering standpoint, existing traffic calls for a new interchange approximately 4,000 feet further east towards Columbia on I-20. Both of these alternatives will be presented at the public information meeting. SC DOT is pursuing earmarked funds in Washington to help fund preliminary engineering and right-of-way for Phase II of the Bobby Jones Expressway. The State Infrastructure Bank will reimburse SC DOT \$1.5 million for funds spent on the Bobby Jones.

SC DOT has let a project to rehabilitate I-20 from mile marker 6 to mile marker 22. The rough or cracked concrete will be cut out and replaced.

(c) Augusta Public Transit

Mr. Johnson was not available to present this item.

(d) Aiken County Transit

Ms. Knapp presented the status of Aiken County Transit. The SC Highway Commissioners have \$15 million earmarked for upgrading transit fleets. The formula was based on needs over the next five years. Aiken County's portion enabled the transit department to purchase three buses in January. The funding is based on five year needs being paid up front with an interest free payback over three years. The vehicles purchased in January will make it possible to increase service into North Augusta and the City of Aiken. An express connection will be established between the two cities and Augusta. One of the routes will be modified to accommodate the new Wal-Mart.

In January, Aiken County kicked off "Commuter Choice", a Federal program new to South Carolina. Participating employers would offer the commuter a \$100 benefit or allow a \$100 pre-tax deduction for riding the bus instead of driving a car. Rides will be guaranteed based on personal schedule. A meeting was held early in January with major employers and the Chamber of Commerce. Negotiations are ongoing with major employers to offer this option to their employees.

The bio-diesel fuel has been used in Best Friends Express buses for almost a full year now. The year-end report will have more details as to mileage and repairs needed.

5. Consider recommendation to approve the final FY 2004 Unified Planning Work Program.

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. The UPWP is the planning and administration work program for the year beginning next July. The draft is presented at this time of the year to provide lead time needed for the approvals at the Federal and State levels. FHWA prefers advance notice of the proposed use of planning funds in the upcoming year. The work program distributed with the agenda gives a brief synopsis of each proposed work element and a spread sheet detailing the budget for all of the major agencies involved in transportation and transit for the ARTS. The draft is almost identical to the current budget in terms of funding levels. Changes are anticipated in the budget amounts once the final version of Federal PL allocation is determined. These changes will be reflected in the final version of the UPWP in March. The major activities are the same as in the past few years. New activities will focus on revisions to the study area boundaries as a result of the 2000 census. The boundaries of the study area may be expanded based on the 2000 census numbers and also with the expectation of the area becoming a non-attainment area for air quality. The new study area boundary will add new traffic analysis zones and other administrative duties. Air quality, rail relocation issues, administration of local transit programs and special studies are some items that will be studied during the year. The CAC and TCC at their February meeting recommended approving the draft UPWP.

Mr. Chuck Smith moved to approve the final FY 2004 UPWP. Mrs. Korbelik seconded. Unanimous approval.

6. Consider an amendment to the SC portion of the FY 03 - 05 TIP to reprogram funds from Phase I & II of the Greenway Riverfront Extension to the Downtown Streetscape Phase I & II.

Mr. Strohminger presented this item. North Augusta has requested permission to reprogram their enhancement funds from the Riverfront projects to their downtown streetscape projects. The Greenway Riverfront Extension Projects will be constructed with funds from a different source. The TCC and CAC recommend approval of the amendment. The total funding available is \$369,000.00.

Mr. Chuck Smith moved to approve the amendment to the TIP contingent on comments received during the public review period. Mr. McDowell seconded. Unanimous approval.

7. Consider a recommendation to amend the ARTS Long Range Plan by adding the Bobby Jones Expressway and Deans Bridge Road interchange as a safety project.

The sponsor of this request was not available to present this item. Mr. Ellis explained that the design of this interchange had outlived its usefulness. There were approximately 50 - 70 accidents at this intersection.

Mr. Simpson moved to postpone this item until the next meeting. Mr. Chuck Smith seconded. Unanimous approval.

8. Consider recommendation to approve the draft FY 04 - 06 TIP.

Mr. Cross commented that Columbia County was seeking an amendment to the TIP as it has discovered urgent needs along the Washington Road corridor due to safety issues. County officials have been working with GA DOT and Mr. Lester to shift interest from other projects to this corridor. The scope of the North Belair Road project is being reduced to a lesser project to be handled by Columbia County. Other projects can also be de-emphasized in order to address Washington Road from Flowing Wells Road to the new Wal-Mart. Washington Road is a four-lane corridor with no turn lanes which experiences high left turn accident volumes. Columbia County is seeking advice and assistance on making this project a priority. At the present time this is the most critical area for public safety in Columbia County.

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. The transportation improvement program is a basic requirement for ARTS to update annually. This TIP will cover the years FY 04 - FY 06 on the Georgia side of the study area. The South Carolina portion of the TIP remains unchanged from last year and covers the years FY 03 - FY 07. The handout is a summary of the TIP as recommended by the Test Network Subcommittee. Highway and bridge projects for each county are listed on separate pages. Proposed funding levels for Augusta Public Transit will change once updated figures are provided by GDOT. Changes made since the draft was mailed include moving the Flowing Wells Road project out to FY 06 and Old Petersburg Road (Q23 only) to FY 04. Also, Aiken County FY 03 enhancement projects have been inadvertently omitted. The 30-

day public review and comment period will begin March 17, 2003. During this time one public meeting will be held in each county to receive public input.

The TCC and CAC approved the draft at their meeting prior to the Policy Committee meeting. Comments from the public, or input received from reviewing agencies, including Mr. Cross' comments, will be considered when preparing the final TIP to be submitted for approval by the Policy Committee in June.

Mayor Young requested consideration including in the TIP a pedestrian bridge being proposed by North Augusta.

Mr. Terry Smith moved to approve the draft TIP with the changes. Mr. Cross seconded. Unanimous approval.

9. Update on Special Studies Projects:

(a) Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. The Bicycle and Pedestrian plan is complete. An executive summary of the Pedestrian and Bike Plan was mailed to voting members of the Policy Committee with their agendas and also posted on the ARTS web site. More summaries will be printed along with the full document. A more detailed description of this plan will be presented before this body formally adopts the plan at the June meeting. The Steering Committee for this project is very satisfied with the process and outcome. This document provides a long-range blueprint for the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the region, including projects that connect the Georgia and South Carolina parts of the study area.

(b) Whiskey Road - Silver Bluff Road Connector Study

Mr. Strohming presented this item. A public information meeting was held in January. Approximately 150 were in attendance. The consultants presented seven possible alignments. An additional meeting was held at a private home to provide information to those directly affected by this project. The consultants will consider comments received and will present a final alternative to a joint meeting of Aiken City Council and the Aiken County Council meeting.

(c) North Augusta Access Management Study

Mr. Grkovic was not available to present this item. The North Augusta Access Management Study is proceeding smoothly.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

George A. Patty
Project Director